

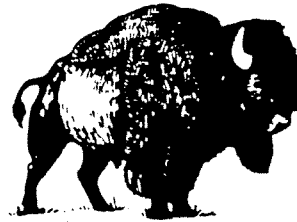
HORNS OR ANTLERS?

Horns are:

- permanent (not shed annually) and grow throughout the animal's lifetime
- unbranched
- closely related to hair and skin, not bone
- found on both males and females of the following animals

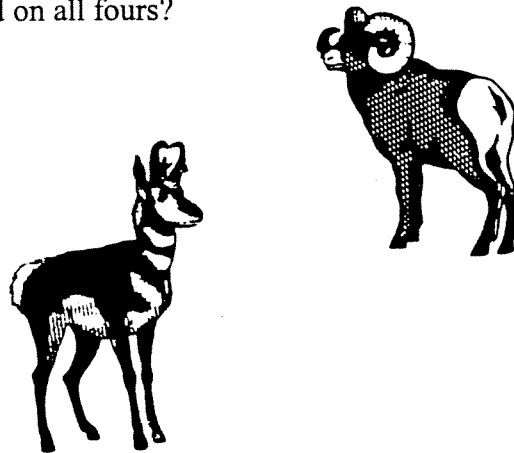
BISON (buffalo)

Yellowstone's bison represent the great living symbol of America's western frontier, having survived the onslaught of reckless hunters who brought the bison population to near extinction in the late 1800s. These animals dwindled to a mere few hundred from an estimated population of about 30 million. Today, Yellowstone National Park protects a natural, free roaming herd of approximately 2,500. How many bison have you seen? Why do you think it is important to protect bison in Yellowstone National Park?



BIGHORN SHEEP

Bighorn sheep live among steep cliffs and rocky hillsides, mainly in the northern part of Yellowstone National Park. They are adept climbers within this rugged habitat because the bottoms of their hooves are somewhat cup-shaped and adapted for gripping rocky surfaces. What adaptations do you have that enable you to walk where you do? How would things be different if we humans walked on all fours?



PRONGHORN (antelope)

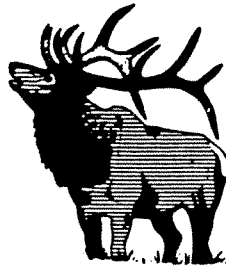
The horns of this animal are an exception to the rules because of two peculiarities. First, the horns of a pronghorn have a small branch, or prong, unlike a typical horn. Secondly, the outer covering of the horn, called the sheath, is shed each year while the inner core grows continuously. In addition to this unusual type of horn, the pronghorn is special because of its fantastic speed. They can reach speeds of up to 60 miles per hour! How fast do you think the fastest human can run? Can you imagine how things might be if people could run as fast as a pronghorn?

Antlers are:

- shed each year in the spring and re-grown by the next fall
- branched in adults
- made of true bone
- found on only the males of the following animals

ELK (wapiti)

The elk in Yellowstone National Park far outnumber all the other hoofed animals represented here added together. In fact, the estimated 25,000 elk which summer in the park make up the largest collection of elk in the world. The Shawnee Indians named this animal wapiti, meaning "white deer," probably for the white patch on its rump. Did you know that the elk and all other animals in Yellowstone National Park are not allowed to be hunted? Why do you think so many elk are able to survive in the park?



MULE DEER (blacktail deer)

This deer is named for its large, mule-like ears that help to distinguish it from whitetail deer, which are also occasionally found in the park. Interestingly, the mule deer depends more on its sense of smell than on hearing to communicate among one another. Can you recognize the differences between mule deer and elk?



MOOSE

The moose, with its large snout, lanky legs, long beard (bell), and palmate antlers, is one of the most peculiar looking animals in Yellowstone. The male averages five to six feet tall at the shoulders and may weigh up to 1,000 pounds, making it the largest member of the deer family. The moose is an excellent swimmer and been known to almost completely submerge in lakes and ponds to feed on aquatic vegetation. Its long legs enable it to wade through marshy areas. How else would a moose's long legs be helpful? Why do you think moose have a bell?

REMEMBER: All of these animals are potentially dangerous and have caused injuries to visitors in the past. Please take time to enjoy them, but do it from a safe distance. If you have questions, any ranger would be happy to help you!